



Religion in the Air Force

Balancing rights and respect

Week of Sept. 5, 2007 – Sept. 11, 2007

The Air Force published its guidelines on the free exercise of religion in February 2006, but some Airmen still find themselves wondering where the lines are when it comes to their faith.

The religious guidelines were not written to prevent people from practicing their faith. Instead, they help protect the constitutional right of all Airmen to practice their beliefs while respecting the beliefs of others. The basic tenets of the religious guidelines are as follows:

- The Air Force remains neutral regarding religious beliefs and will accommodate personal beliefs unless limited by military necessity
- Chaplains work for commanders to help care for people of all beliefs
- Leaders at every level enjoy the same freedom of expression as all Airmen, but must ensure their words and actions are not construed as official, nor endorsing or disapproving of a particular belief
- Airmen are entitled to practice and freely discuss their personal faith beliefs. There is no restriction on voluntary discussions of religion or the exercise of free speech where it is reasonably clear the discussions are personal, not official or coercive
- Public prayer for special events is appropriate, but should not imply government endorsement of a specific religion. Mutual respect, common sense, circumstances and needs of the command all apply

Air Force Chief of Chaplains Maj. Gen. Charles Baldwin said, "The religious guidelines are balanced between not establishing a government religion and the free exercise of religion. No one has the right to coerce anyone regarding his or her faith, and everyone has the right to practice his or her own faith. It is amazing how well this works in the Air Force."

For more information and guidance visit <http://www.af.mil/library/guidelines.pdf>, or contact your wing chaplain.

Find Airman's Roll Call Online Here: <http://www.af.mil/library/viewpoints/>

Airman's Roll Call is designed for supervisors at all levels to help keep Airmen informed on current issues, clear up confusion, dispel rumors, and provide additional face-to-face communication between supervisors and their teams.